

# sit + reflect

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Human Relations – 5140

Dr. Barbara Bridges

Metaphor Sculpture Assignment

Summer 2015

# sit + reflect

## **artist statement:**

I have participated in Human Relations in Education through the lens of a middle school teacher. I have considered many other view points and how they affect our entire communities, but I always came back to “how will this affect *my* students”? With my students in mind, I created a sculpture that is more hands on—the students use the sculpture to help them digest experiences and data and then reflect on what it means to them. Middle school hallways are filled with the imaginary audience-- an egocentric state where students imagine and believe that *everyone* is enthusiastically listening to or watching them. According to Richard Ryan and Rebecca Kuczkowski (1994) from the University of Rochester,

Concern with how others view one's self is a characteristic of both maturity and conformism. To be without concern or perspective with regard to others' viewpoints is to be socially insensitive and/or immature. However, to be dominated or preoccupied by what others think can be antithetical to autonomy and self-direction, i.e., represents conformity.

I see students everyday during the school year take painstaking hours getting dressed in the morning, doing their hair, and checking in with their friends to make sure they are not the odd one out. With everyone's eyes on them at all times, students struggle to develop their true identity. They want to be the reflection of society. This is where students feel tension. While learning about various marginalized groups, we have studied how rather than accepting others for who they are (race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, etc.), people choose to either judge, prejudice, hate, or change. With these pressures, the oppressed either form hatred in return or will succumb and strive to change to match the reflection of society. Throughout this course we have learned that there is no “perfect” person. With this in mind, the sculpture that I built will help *all* students reflect on who they are, develop their self-identity, and begin creating an image of what they want to grow into.

## **a place in the community:**

This fall, “sit & reflect” will be displayed in the Cambridge Middle School counselor's office. After meeting with Tricia Anderson, the school counselor at my school for the past 8 years, informed me that one of the leading interventions of the school counselor is working with students' on building quality peer relationships. She says that most of the confrontations, bullying incidences, and student stresses, is rooted in the desire to “fit in” within the crowded hallways. Our hope is that “sit & reflect” will inspire students to really analyze who they are. Positioned on the back of

the bench are give round mirrors. This where students can take a closer look at who they *really* are and ask themselves the tough questions like “Why do I want to be like everyone else?” and “What is going to make me happy?” Depending on the student’s unique needs, Anderson says the bench can be used either independently—a quiet space where they can work through issues themselves—or with the help of the counselor who can ask prompting questions. At the end of the reflection, students will use colorful markers to write a short inspirational message to share with the students that will use the bench. It is a representation of the community and the struggles that they are all privately facing.



### **inspiration:**

The inspiration for my sculpture came from a “Photo of the Day” found on Pinterest. The image is a picture of a girl holding a mirror. You can see her face, but most of her body is hidden by a mirror, which is a reflection of her surroundings. The title of the piece is “Invisible Reflection”.

### **design elements:**

#### Elements of Design

- Shape – the back of the bench is straight horizontal line. The mirrors that are mounted on the back are circular. A circle represents the notions of *totality*, *wholeness*, *original perfection*, and the *Self* (Circle, n.d.)
- Color – basic colors (deep walnut stain, ivory white, and black). These colors were chosen to represent a blank canvas. The bright permanent marker messages added by the students will juxtapose and stand out against the basic colors of the bench



#### Principles of Design

- Balance – the mirrors positioned on the back of the bench are symmetrical
- Emphasis – the audience’s eye is drawn to the large mirror on the center of the bench’s back
- Movement/Rhythm – the mirrors are placed on the back of the bench in a set symmetrical pattern

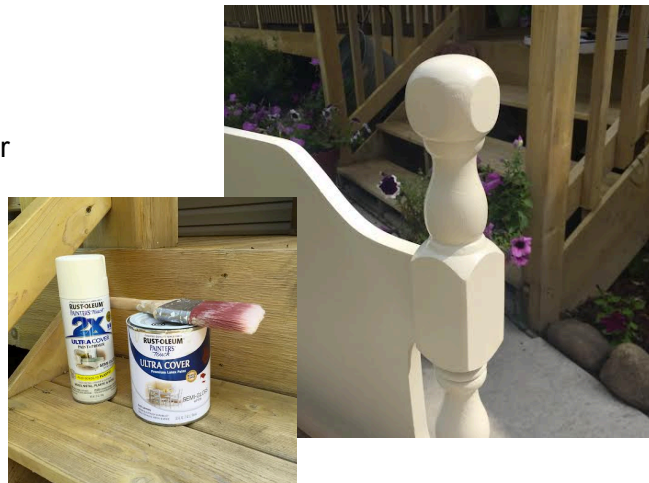
**building process:** As a DIYer I have always liked to repurpose old materials. This entire project was made out of materials that I had around the house. I feel this adds to the overall message of the sculpture—we already have everything that we need, we just need to change the way we look at it.

### Materials

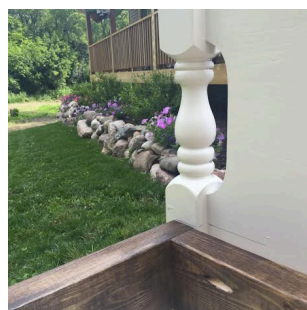
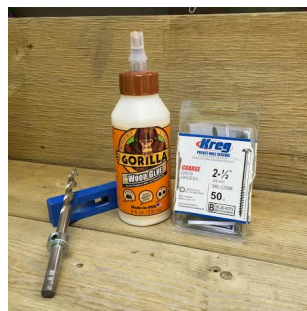
- Headboard – the back of the bench was an old headboard that was taking up space in my in-laws garage
- Scrap Wood – the seat and the front legs were scrap pieces of wood from when we built our pole shed this spring. I used 3 pieces of 6 foot 2x4's and 2 pieces of 6 foot 2x8s for the seat
- Mirrors – these were a gift from our wedding (2012...). I hadn't found a place for them in our house

### Steps

1. The original headboard was stained gunstock. I used white paint as a primer and then ivory spray paint for the final coat.

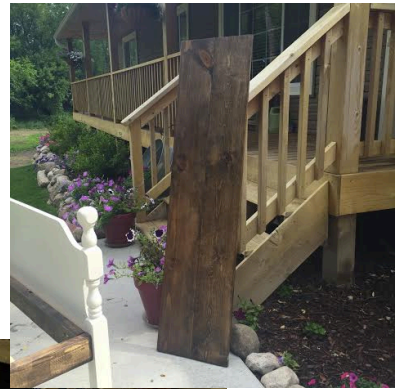


2. The base of the bench was made of 2x4s fastened together using pocket screws. It was stained walnut oak to match the seat and finished with a finishing wax. The base of the bench was then secured to the headboard.





3. The seat of the bench is built of 1x8s and stained walnut. The seat was finished with a more durable polycrylic protective finish. The seat was then attached to the seat base.



4. Using a paint marker, I wrote "sit & reflect" on the bench seat. The writing is hollow representing an empty shell. Lastly, the mirrors were arranged and mounted to the back of the seat.



## active reflection:



### Leave Your Mark

At the end of your experience with “sit & reflect”, use one of the colorful permanent markers to write a short inspirational message to share with the others that will use the bench or a short summary of how this bench has affected you, either positive or negative.

### Feedback for the Artist

## Questions? Comments?

Just like you and I, we are always growing and changing. The sculpture will change over time to meet the needs of its audience. Please leave any comments, suggestions, or questions for the artist.

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## references

Circle. (n.d.). Retrieved July 24, 2015, from

<http://www.umich.edu/~umfandsf/symbolismproject/symbolism.html/C/circle.html>

Ryan, R., & Kusczkowski, R. (1994). The imaginary audience, self-consciousness, and public individuation in adolescence. *Journal of Personality*, 62(2), 219-238.